

THE MEANING OF LEWIS

Q. Could you please let me know what is the true meaning of a Lewis and who can be one?

A. This question, or one very like it, was dealt with in the summons of March, 1963 and anyone who wants a fuller reply will do well to consult Harry Carr's book 'The Freemason at work' (pp77 and 78). Yet as more than one of you has recently asked the question let me suggest a few thoughts and state a few facts.

The second part of the question is the easiest. The Board of General Purposes of the United Grand Lodge of England has declared that 'A Lewis is the uninitiated son of a mason' and this interpretation has been known in the Craft since at least 1738. The Grand Lodge has gone even further and stated that a son is a Lewis whether he was born before his father became a mason or not. Contrary to what some may believe or claim a Lewis has no priority over other candidates for admission to the Craft and must enter in the way required of all other applicants. There is some evidence for there having been a form of 'acceptance' of a mason's child as a 'Lewis' by a simple ceremony known as a masonic baptism and in the masonic hall at Old Elvet, Durham, a special apron for such a person can still be seen.

This sense of 'attachment to masonry' is reflected in the operative use of the term when it is an iron contrivance of three carefully arranged metal parts that can grip a bar let into the top of a carved stone, thus enabling it to be hoisted into place. The Lewis thus has no significance save as an adjunct to that which is already part of the masonic structure.

Whether the mediaeval forms of the word - 'lowes' and 'lowys' were taken from the Norman French word meaning 'wolf-cub' we cannot be sure but the link in thought of an offspring and that which holds tenaciously to its parent's purpose is at least a possibility. The French word 'louveteau' (wolf-cub) was also used in the 1740s to signify the very same idea in Freemasonry across the Channel.

Neville B. Cryer

WHY 'BLUE' LODGES

Q. When and where did our Lodges acquire the word 'blue' as they still do in some parts of the world? I should be most interested to know.

A. I believe that you have here touched on a matter which merits still further examination though we can learn something from Bernard E. Jones (*Freemasons' Guide and Compendium*, pp. 470 ff). We there learn that the clothing of the groups of degree is related mainly to certain colours: the Craft or symbolic degrees with blue; the Royal Arch and related orders with crimson; and the other degrees with green, white or black.

Certainly the blue vault of heaven suggested universality and blue carried long associations of immortality, chastity and fidelity, and these were at once indicative of all the best characteristics of a true mason's heart. It has been suggested that this colour was adopted in England from the very earliest days of the premier Grand Lodge and that the distinction of dark blue for the Grand Lodge officers was due to George I changing the old Garter Blue of Edward III (which was of the Cambridge light blue variety) to its present deeper hue so as to distinguish it from that which the Stuarts conferred on their adherents in exile. Blue as the basic masonic colour was thus soon established.

When the fact was recognised that blue was also the chief religious colour of the Jews and that the High Priest had a blue robe it is hardly surprising that for degrees associated with the Temple of Solomon this should be the primary colour and all lodges related to that legend should bear that name.

The distinction arose when the first signs of another masonic step were perceived. This related to the emblem of blood spilt in martyrdom and exile, fortitude and magnanimity, as well as being an indication of royal or princely dignity. It was thus a natural colour to be mingled with blue for the Mark and to separate strongly the dress for the Holy Royal Arch. From the 1730s, especially in the colonies of America, the 'blue degrees' were precise and identifiable. They led to the rank of Master Mason as they do to this day.

Neville B. Cryer.